

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-02 IO-14 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00

NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

OMB-01 SY-04 USSS-00 DRC-01 /123 W

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FM USINT DAMASCUS

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM FLASH

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 548

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0735

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (HENRY A. KISSINGER), SY

SUBJECT: DAMASCUS ATMOSPHERE

1. LOCAL MEDIA TREAT MAJRALOT INCIDENT IN TERMS OF "ISRAELI TREACHERY AND LIES" BLAMING ISRAEL FOR "MASSACRE" BECAUSE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WENT BACK ON ITS EARLIER PROMISES TO

MEET DEMANDS OF THE FEDAYEEN. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO COMMENT, THE NEWS STORY IN THE GOVERNMENT ORGAN AL-THAWRA

IS HANDLED IN A SEMI-EDITORIAL WAY INDICATING THAT THE

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IS PUTTING FULL BLAME ON ISRAEL FOR WHAT FINALLY HAPPENED.

2. DAMASCUS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN ARE ALSO ECHOING SAME LINE. SOME HAVE NOTED DISCREPENCIES IN ISRAELI VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED POINT OUT THAT THE FEDAYEEN

DEADLINE WAS TO HAVE EXPIRED AT 6:00P.M. BUT THAT THE

ISRAELIS MOUNTED THEIR ONSLAUGHT AT 5:30. MANY

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DAMASCENES ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT IMPACT THIS INCIDENT

COULD HAVE ON THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MANY OF THEM TO BLAME THE FEDAYEEN EVEN THOUGH THEY DEPLORE THE DEATHS OF INNOCENT CHILDREN.

3. USINT CONTACTS ALSO ABSERVE THAT YESTERDAY WAS 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM PALESTINE AND SAY THAT THE MANY FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS WHICH WERE MOUNTED YESTERDAY IN ISRAEL HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN PLANNED LONG BEFORE THE SECRETARY CAME INTO THE AREA. IN THIS CONNECTION, SOME ALSO SAY THAT THE TARGETS WERE NOT CHOSEN HAPHAZARDLY AND THEY ALLEGE THAT THE SCHOOL AT MA'ALOT WAS A PARAMILITARY TRAINING BASE FOR TEENAGERS AND, THEREFORE, IN THEIR MINDS AT LEAST, A VALID TARGET FOR THE FEDAYEEN.

4. AS RESULT OF MA'ALOT INCIDENT MANY PEOPLE HERE ARE

ALSO AGAIN EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR SOME FOCUS ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AS PART OF THE CURRENT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE DISENGAGEMENT. THEY SAY THAT UNLESS SOME GESTURE TOWARD OR ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS IS MADE THE EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS WILL CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO FRUSTRATE DISENGAGEMENT. IN THIS REGARD BRITISH CHARGE

BALFOUR MENTIONED TO USINT OFFICER TODAY THAT ACCORDING TO RELIABLE REPORT PRESIENT ASAD RECENTLY PROMISED ARAFAT THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT SIGN A DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT UNLESS

A CLEAR COIMITMENT IS MADE THAT THIS AGREEMENT IS ONLY A FIRST STEP TOWARD EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION.

5. FINALLY, LAST EVENING I CALLED AGAIN ON PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY ELIAS TO DISCUSS THE SECRETARY'S SCHEDULE. FOLLOWING THAT WE ALSO HAD GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE MA'ALOT INCIDENT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS INCIDENT WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO HAVE ANY BEARING ON THE CURRENT SYRIAN/ISRAELI TALKS. HE CONTINUED THAT AS FAR AS SYRIA IS CONCERNED IT CONFIDENTIAL

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KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE OPERATION AND DOES NOT CONSIDER ITSELF RESPONSIBLE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE NOTED "ISRAELI DECEIT" IN MAKING PROMISES TO THE FEDAYEEN WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PLANNING TO TAKE THE SCHOOL BY FORCE. HE CONTINUED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE INDULGED IN THIS KIND OF TACTICS

BEFORE AND RECALLED THE SINKING OF THE "PATRIA"
IN HAIFA HARBOR IN 1946 WHEN ISRAELI TERRORISTS FOR
PROPAGANDA PURPOSES BLEW UP A SHIP CARRYING JEWISH REFUGEES.

6. COMMENT: THE EXTREMISTS HAVE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THE
DANGEROUS UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN
THE MIDDLE EAST AND HAVE UNDERScoreD THEREBY THE NEED
FOR A SYRIAN/ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

IN ORDER TO UNDERCUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER ARAB
TERRORIST AND ISRAELI RETALIATORY ACTIONS. AS FAR AS

SYRIA IS CONCERNED EVEN THOUGH NO ONE HERE CONDONES THE
MURDER OF INNOCENTS, IT IS NONETHELESS DIFFICULT FOR AN
OUTSIDER TO ASK SYRIANS TO CONDEMN "OPERATION" BY MEN
WHO ARE LOCALLY CONSIDERED TO BE PATRIOTS AND NOT
TERRORISTS, PARTICULARLY AS THESE "OPERATIONS" TOOK PLACE
ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE "LOSS OF THEIR HOMELAND." THIS
TOO, POINTS TO THE NEED FOR AN URGENT CONSIDERATION OF
WHAT STEPS SHOULD NOW BE TAKEN TO BEGIN TO ESTABLISH
CONTACTS WITH THE PALESTINIANS AS A PRELUDE TO THEIR
BEING INCLUDED IN THE CURRENT PROCESS LEADING EVENTUALLY
TO GENEVA.
SCOTES

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